# Third Church of Christ, Scientist

(NOW METROPOLITAN MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH)

2151 WEST WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

PRELIMINARY STAFF SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS
MAY, 1988

THIRD CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST
(now Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church)
2151 West Washington Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois

Date of Construction: 1899-1901
Architect: Hugh M. G. Garden

The foundation of new religious organizations has historically presented architects with a series of challenging fuctional, structural, and aesthetic problems. Because the message, ceremonial needs, and exterior image of a new faith often stand in contrast to the previous religious tradition, new design solutions are required. With the establishment of formal Christian worship in the fourth century A.D., for example, a building type with no previous connections with religious activity, the Roman judicial basilica, was adopted and transformed into a new religious building type. To a lesser degree, the foundation of Protestant Christian churches during the sixteenth and later centuries required designs that were functionally and aesthetically distinct from those of Catholic churches. In both of these examples of change in organization and devotional practice, elements of the previous design tradition were retained: classical columns carried arcades in the early Christian basilicas, and pointed arches formed the window openings in many churches of different Protestant denominations. The fact that certain elements of design retained their associations with places of religious ceremony is evidence of the tensions between the prevailing design aesthetic of a society and innovations in religious belief and practice. It is in the effort to resolve these tensions, to integrate novel function and aesthetic tradition in an attempt to arrive at a new synthesis, that the architect who designs for a new religious organization has an opportunity to exercise his creative talent. One such opportunity, smaller in scale than the examples cited above, was presented by the foundation of Christian Science in the late nineteenth century.

The concept of Christian Science was first annunciated at Boston, Massachusetts by Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910). In 1875 Mrs. Eddy published the authoritative tract for the movement, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures;* she began preaching in 1878 and founded the First Church of Christ, Scientist of Boston the next year. Known

then and now as "The Mother Church" of Christian Science, the first phase of construction on the building that houses this congregation was begun in 1880 and completed in 1894.

In Chicago, Christian Science was formally established in June, 1886, with the incorporation of the First Church of Christ, Scientist on the South Side. In 1894 the Second Church was organized on the North Side, and the number of followers grew large enough to support the establishment of the Third Church in December, 1898 on the West Side. The Christian Science community in Chicago continued to grow steadily, having established six congregations with an estimated membership of 3,655 by 1906, and having further expanded to fourteen congregations by 1914.

Christian Science is described as a departure from traditional Christian faith rather than as a stage in its development. The Science congregation gathers for the purposes of reading, interpretation, and sharing experiences, without the direction of a professional clergy or of a formal service based on long-established traditions. In an unsigned article titled "The Architecture of Certain Christian Science Churches" published in the architectural journal *The Craftsman* the author emphasized that, due to the lack of formal limitations, places of Christian Science worship "are free to develop into unusual forms":

> Since Christian Science is devoid of mysticism and formalisms, and has no other mission than to give understanding to its students, its adherents are inclined to discard many time-honored customs, and to introduce entirely new designs for church auditoriums; planning simply for convenient and comfortable rooms wherein to congregate and hear the truth. These places of assembly are distinguished for extreme simplicity, for freedom from historic decoration, for the absence of pagan symbols adapted to ornamentation, and for the disregard of obsolete ideas: which features indicate that Christian Scientists have departed from tradition and are animated by a real and unfettered purpose.

Elaborating on these concepts, the author drew upon six Christian Science churches as manifest examples: the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston, the First Churches respectively of Cleveland and Denver, and the Second Churches in New York City, Kansas City, and Chicago. The Mother Church in Boston was the only example built in the 1880s, and it was also the only one designed after the Romanesque style. The other five buildings were all designed in the Beaux Arts style, having temple front elevations that borrowed freely from antique monuments such as the Pantheon at Rome or the Erechthion at Athens. The author gave an apology for the classical exterior designs of these buildings by claiming that a traditional church exterior, presumably one based on Gothic or basilican prototypes, would fail to convey the unique nature of Christian Science worship. In addition, he defended the choice of the Beaux Arts style for Science churches in particular as a point of common reference between modern and ancient believers who shared faith in philosophical principles.

One of the architects responsible for the promotion of classical models for Christian Science facade designs was Solon S. Beman of Chicago, designer of the industrial community of Pullman, Illinois. Beginning with the First Church of Christ, Scientist of Chicago at 4019 South Drexel Boulevard in 1897 (Fig. 1), and including the Second Church of Chicago built in 1899 and discussed in the article from *The Craftsman*, Beman designed a total of twenty Science churches in the Beaux Arts style. Six of these were in Chicago: in addition to the First and Second Churches, he designed the Fourth and Fifth Churches in 1904, the Seventh Church in 1907, and the Sixth Church in 1911 (Fig. 2). Eventually a convert to the faith, Beman also wrote on the theory and form of Christian Science architecture. By the time of his death in 1914 he had realized Science church designs in New York City, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Denver, and in Lincoln, Nebraska and Portland, Oregon; in addition he received commissions for an addition to The Mother Church in Boston and for the remodeling of Mary Baker Eddy's residence in Newton, Massachusetts. By their prolific number, wide geographic distribution, and prominence early in the history of the movement, Beman's evocations of antiquity had a large part in developing an association between Christian Science and classical design.

The evidence presented by these buildings, however, does not support the rhetoric of the author in *The Craftsman* that the designers of Science churches "departed as far as possible from the ordinary, in the desire to make the outward appearance of the structures as new as the religion to be taught therein." Beman's designs, like that of the Romanesque-inspired Mother Church twenty years before, outwardly conform to contemporary taste in architectural style. The innovations in these churches, rather than in their facade designs, are in the introduction of tiered theater seating to the religious interior, in the attention given to acoustic design, and in the ways in which he and other architects fit curvilinear interior spaces into the rectangular classical exterior treatments that then characterized the height of taste. A new format for services that required invention in interior design, a desire to conform with and appropriate the current popular taste in exterior style, and a wish to appear unique and innovative were the requirements that Hugh M. G. Garden sought to incorporate and resolve in his design for the Third Church of Christ, Scientist of Chicago.

Hugh Mackie Gorden Garden was born July 9, 1873 at Toronto, Ontario, the son of a civil engineer. He was raised in the Episcopal faith which he practiced throughout his life. His family sent him to the Bishop College School in Lennoxville, Quebec, where he matriculated in 1887. His father had died the previous year, and subsequent financial problems forced Garden to emigrate with his family to live with relatives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. By the end of 1887 his interest in architecture and skill as a draftsman had earned him an apprenticeship in the Minneapolis office of the Harvard-educated architect William Channing Whitney.

The date of Garden's arrival in Chicago has not been ascertained. His earliest known mention is on the list of active members of the Chicago Architectural Sketch Club in their 1892 exhibition catalogue titled *Sketches*. Two undated drawings from his hand, a membership initiation drawing and a drawing submitted for the Club's Clark Medal competi-

tion of 1891, were published in this catalogue. During his first years in the city he apprenticed in the office of Flanders and Zimmerman, followed by short terms as a draftsman for Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge and for Henry Ives Cobb.

Late in 1893 Garden founded his private practice, both designing buildings of his own and hiring himself out to other firms as a delineator. Examples of his work reproduced in the Chicago Architectural Club annual exhibition catalogues of the 1890s included renderings done for Alfred Hoyt Granger, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Richard E. Schmidt. His own designs ran the gamut of building types, including houses and apartment buildings, a theatre, office buildings, churches, and a college science hall.

According to a letter written in 1964 by his daughter, Sally Garden Mitchell, Richard Schmidt invited Garden to join his office as its chief designer in 1897, with the provision that Garden could continue to pursue his separate practice. Among the buildings Garden designed for Schmidt were: the Montgomery Ward Office Building on Michigan Avenue, built in 1898; the Schoenhofen Brewery Powerhouse of 1902 at 18th Street and Canalport Avenue; the Albert F. Madlener House of 1902 at 4 West Burton Place, designated a Chicago Landmark in 1973; the Chapin & Gore Building at 63 East Adams Street, built in 1904 and designated a Chicago Landmark in 1982; and the 1905 Michael Reese Hospital Building at 29th Street and South Ellis Avenue. From the beginning of this association until the formation of the partnership of Richard E. Schmidt, Garden & Martin in 1906, Garden continued to produce work independently.

In January, 1899 a building committee made up of trustees of the First, Second, and Third Christian Science congregations of Chicago was convened to consider sites and plans for two new church buildings. The commission notices, published in the April 15, 1899 edition of the *American Contractor*, announced that Solon S. Beman had prepared plans for the Second Church, to be built at Wrightwood and Pine Grove avenues on the North Side, and that Hugh M. G. Garden had "prepared competitive plans which have been accepted" for the Third Church.

The Third Church of Christ, Scientist of Chicago is, at 93 by 120 feet in plan, the largest religious structure built after a design by Garden. The church was constructed in a residential area that had been developed during the 1880s and 1890s with middle-class brick and stone single-family and two-flat rowhouses. Excavation was started on October 11, 1899, less than a year after the congregation was established; the cornerstone was laid with a ceremony on July 31, 1900, and the building was dedicated with four services on July 14, 1901. The cost of the land, the building, its organ and furnishings was estimated at $120,000 and, in compliance with Christian Science practice, the dedication was made only when the church was free of mortgage debt.

The church is a three-story, masonry bearing-wall structure (Fig. 3). Its principal facade faces Washington Boulevard to the north and its west elevation faces Leavitt Street; the south side of the building fronts on an alley, and the east side is presently abutted by

a recent two-story brick religious school and hall. All of its exterior walls were finished with white glazed brick manufactured by the Tiffany Enameled Brick Company, and the window and door frames, column capitals, cornices, and other decorative details were rendered in white terra cotta made by the American Terra Cotta and Ceramic Company of Crystal Lake, Illinois. The shafts of the two free-standing columns at the principal entrance and the facing on the foundation were carved in granite (Fig. 4).

Like other contemporary Christian Science churches, the massing, the color, and the articulation of many of the exterior design features of the Third Church were derived from antique prototypes. Garden followed the hierarchy of the Greek and Roman temple system, producing an elevation that has a stylobate, or platform, columns and engaged piers, an architrave and frieze, and a cornice. The porch and main portal conform in plan and elevation with the element of Greek temple design known as a pronaos with columns in antis, a chamber whose entrance has two free-standing columns between engaged piers. In Greek temples the pronaos was the space that separated the exterior colonnade from the inner chamber, the naos, which housed the image of the diety. The attic story, standing above the cornice but not as wide, has a single round-arched window under a low pediment and a crossed gable roof line; these features were adopted from the late Roman era designs of the Baths of Caracalla and the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine at Rome.

In detail, Garden did not attempt to replicate antique designs with archaeological accuracy but chose to create a unique combination of the classical with ornament that was inspired by modern architectural theory. In their buildings and writings, his contemporaries Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright had emphasized the use of indigenous natural forms in ornament as a means of integrating a building with its surroundings. Garden was one of a number of young architects who saw Sullivan and Wright as their mentors and who adopted their theoretical principles. Following Sullivan's admonition to wean architecture away from historic precedents, he regularly employed ornamental details that were inspired by forms found in nature. At the Third Church he applied these theories in the designs of the terra-cotta and stained-glass details, combining the curved forms of foliage observed from nature with geometric abstractions of organic forms (Fig. 5). Flowers and seedpods proliferate in these details, establishing lyrical rhythms that break the rigid geometry of those elements inspired by the classical (Fig. 6).

Among the most innovative details Garden produced here was a series of six circular terra-cotta panels in low relief for the frieze of the main facade. Rendered in three different designs, each has a cross flanked by angelic wings in a frame of stylized arrowheads (Fig. 7). According to his drawings, Garden had originally intended Sullivanesque geometric designs for these panels (Fig. 8). These were rejected, as was his intention to continue the run of relief panels on the Leavitt Street elevation. The final result was a compromise that more clearly identified the building as a church but, in keeping with the Scientists avowed distaste for "pagan historic imagery," one that allowed him to manipulate the devices into designs that have no recognizable precedents.

The first floor of the interior is an intermediate space between the auditorium and the street that was and is used as a casual meeting place before and after services. A staircase in the center of this room, since removed, led up to the center of the auditorium. The rectangular plan of the building is punctuated at each of its corners by stairwells that lead from the vestibule to the auditorium and balcony levels. The size and location of the stairwells divide the auditorium into a cruciform plan, with separate balconies in each of the north, east, and west arms of the cross. Four short barrel vaults rise above the balconies, and a single monumental scale quadripartite vault covers the crossing (Fig. 9). The gently curved and coffered shapes of the ceiling were designed to enhance the acoustics of the space, aiding the reader at the rostrum, the witnesses who spoke from the congregation, and listeners seated in any part of the room. The interior is free of supports or obstructions, and the sight lines focus on the rostrum and south wall, where a pair of columns that carry a heavy architrave and a single round arch form a screen for the organ pipes. In the columns, architrave, and arch Garden repeated the prominent elements of the elevations, lending their monumentality to the focal point of the interior design.

Dedication ceremonies for the Third Church were proclaimed in an enthusiastic decription of the design in the *Chicago Inter Ocean* newspaper. Concerning the exterior, the author noted that "the building, while following slightly classical lines in its general form, varies far from the classic in every other respect, and is not designed in any of the historic styles of architecture." It was for the interior, however, that the highest critical praise was reserved:

> Of the auditorium itself, it may be said that its most striking feature is the simplicity, breadth, and power of its proportions. The great expanse of its surfaces, the uplift of its high, vaulted ceiling, the softness and harmony of its decorations, with the rich lighting from many beautiful windows, combine to make a room which is architecturally a unit, and of which every part combines to give the impression of harmony and peace.

Garden's interior details, like those on the exterior, were radical for the time. In the first floor vestibule, mosaic fireplaces with no mantles and an unorthodox shape were surrounded by furnishings manufactured by Gustav Stickley's Craftsman Studios of Eastwood, New York. The seats in the auditorium, whose iron supports are rendered in a floral design, were stock reproductions of a motif created by Louis Sullivan and first used in the Auditorium Building. The stair rails and newel posts, window frames, lectern, and moldings in wood and plaster exemplified the Craftsman aesthetic, in that their materials were honestly expressed in modern designs (Fig. 10).

This building served the Third Church congregation for 46 years. With the pace of demographic change in the neighborhood increasing during the 1940s, and the subsequent movement of many church members to new neighborhoods farther to the west, the Third Church sold the building to the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church in 1947. Founded in 1920 by the Reverend E. F. Smith, the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church had occupied a smaller structure at Warren Boulevard and Western Avenue for many years.

The high degree of integrity of the historic fabric overall and in detail is in large part due to the care that this congregation has continued to take with the building.

After the successful completion of this building, Garden went on to design at least one other Christian Science church, the First Church of Marshalltown, Iowa, built in 1902-03 (Fig. 11). This building, which was demolished in 1985, was much smaller than the Third Church of Chicago, having been built on a total budget of $5,115. Like the Third Church, the Marshalltown church had a Greek cross plan, a crossed gable roof line, and large stained glass windows in the gable ends. Here the similarities ended, however: the Marshalltown church had a single story, instead of three; it was built of wood and faced with stucco, rather than masonry; and its design made no concessions to an antiquarian style. Geographically and conceptually isolated from the pretensions of the Beaux Arts style, and working with a budget that would not allow for granite columns or custom ordered terra-cotta details, Garden was free in this design to expand upon the principles he had introduced in detail at the Third Church of Chicago. The Marshalltown church lived up to the rhetoric of the ideal Science house of worship as a design that was free of historic stylistic and decorative principles.

Hugh Garden broke with the precedent of archaeologically accurate imitation of the antique in Christian Science facade design by introducing elements that derived their inspiration from contemporary architectural theory. In the Third Church of Chicago, his use of organic and geometric forms in a reinterpretation of the formulae of Beaux Arts detail set his design apart and gave the building an identity that is uniquely modern and American. The result was a design that succeeded in satisfying its patrons' desire to communicate a departure from the ordinary and expressed, in a manner that none of the churches designed by Beman could, the unique nature of Christian Science faith and practice.

Figure 1: The First Church of Christ, Scientist of Chicago, now the Grant Memorial Church, 4019 South Drexel Boulevard. Built in 1897 from a design by Solon S. Beman.

*(Photograph by Raymond T. Tatum for the Chicago Historic Resources Survey)*

Figure 2: The Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist of Chicago, now the Mission of Faith Baptist Church, 11319 South Prairie Avenue. Built in 1911-12 from a design by Solon S. Beman.

*(Photograph by Timothy N. Wittman for the Chicago Historic Resources Survey)*

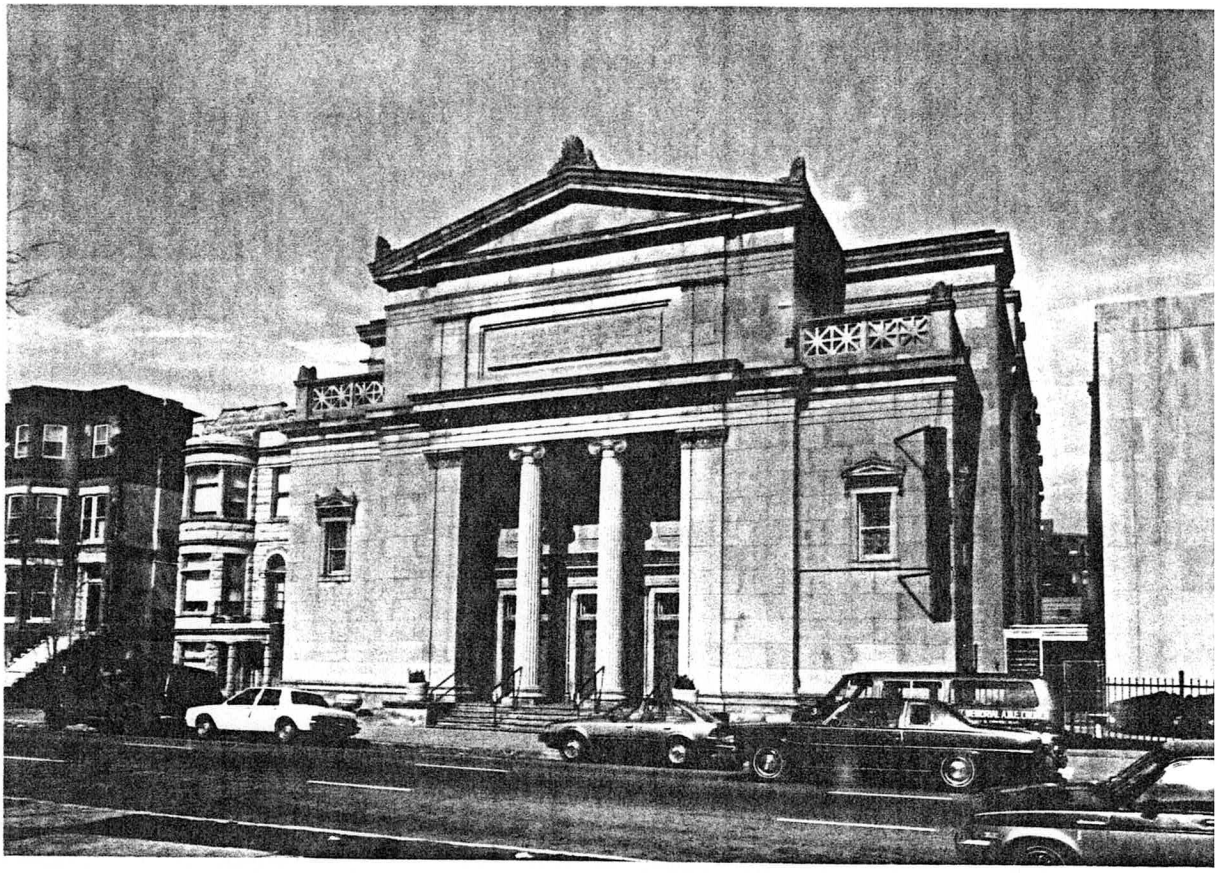
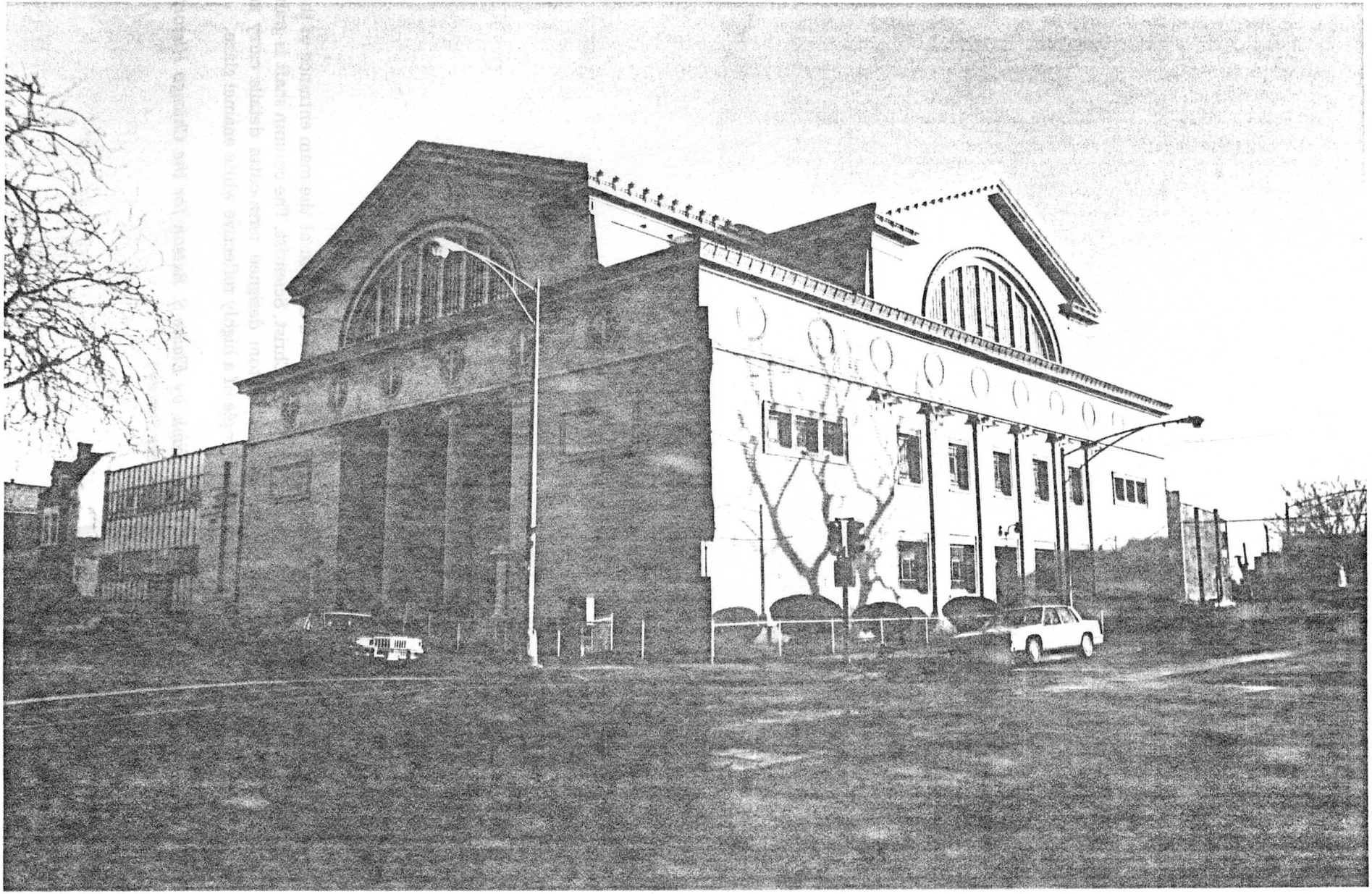


Figure 3: The Third Church of Christ, Scientist of Chicago, now the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church, 2151 West Washington Boulevard. View from the northwest.

*(Photograph by Elaine S. Batson for the Chicago Historic Resources Survey)*



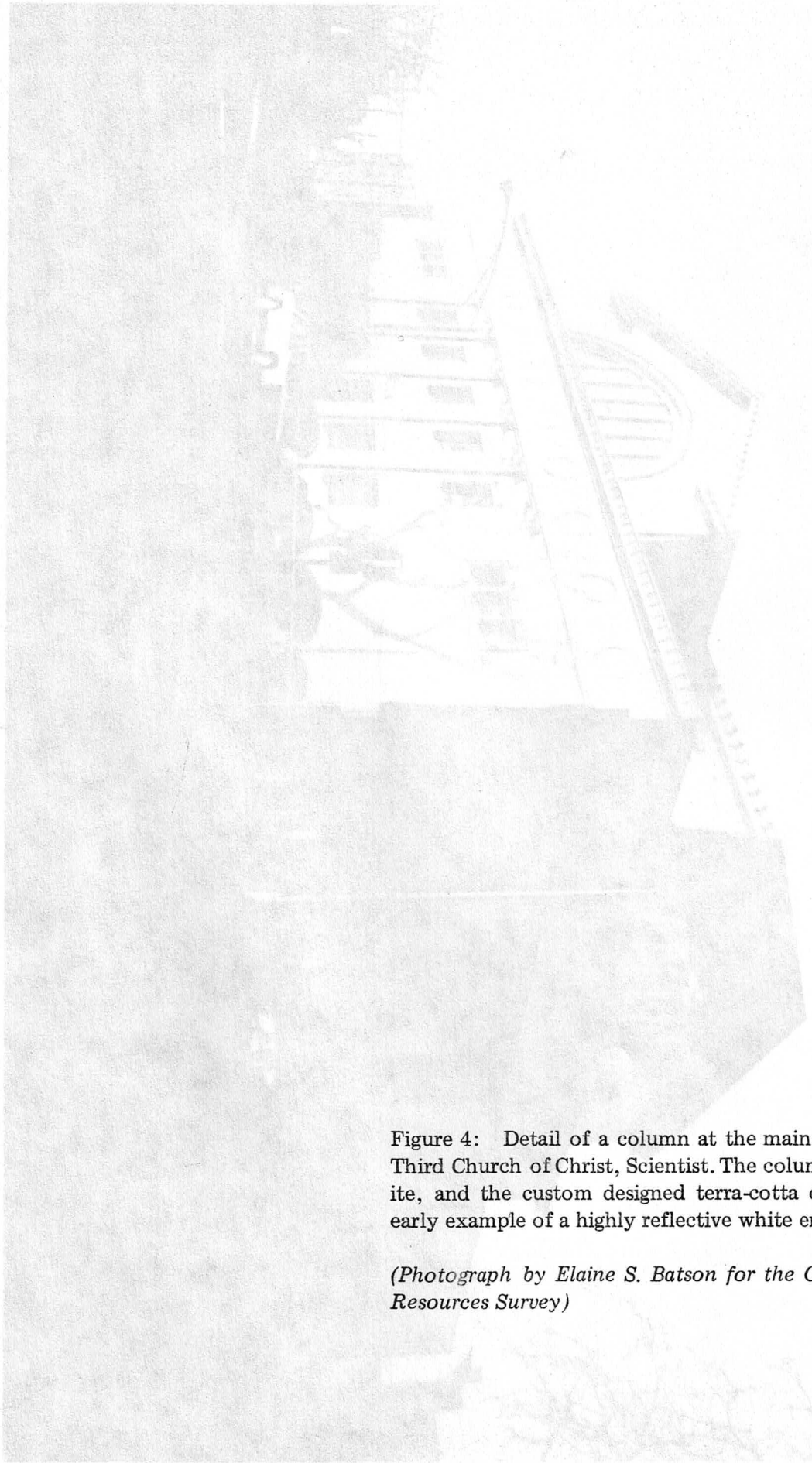


Figure 4: Detail of a column at the main entrance of the Third Church of Christ, Scientist. The column shaft is granite, and the custom designed terra-cotta details carry an early example of a highly reflective white enamel glaze.

*(Photograph by Elaine S. Batson for the Chicago Historic Resources Survey)*

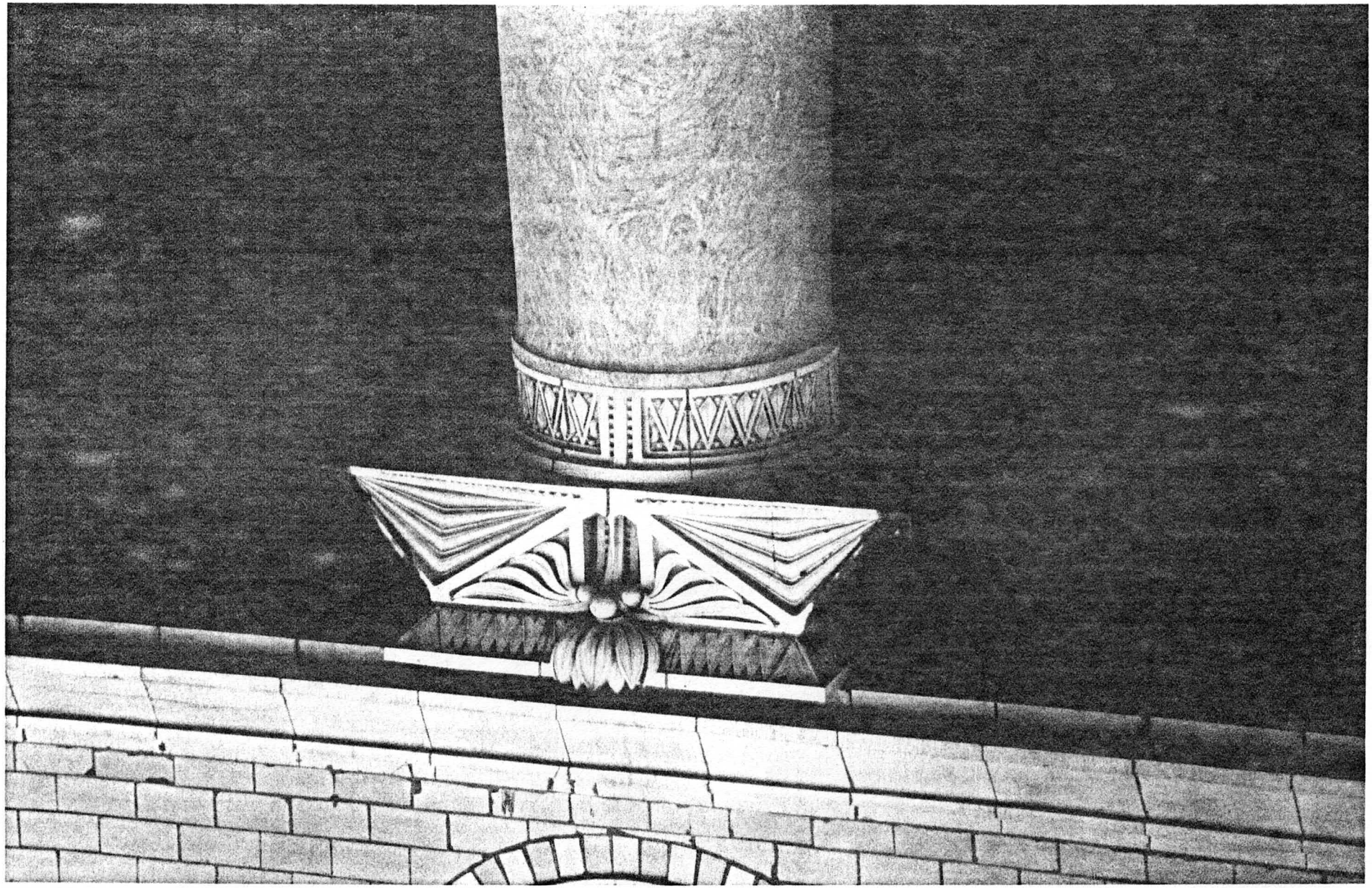
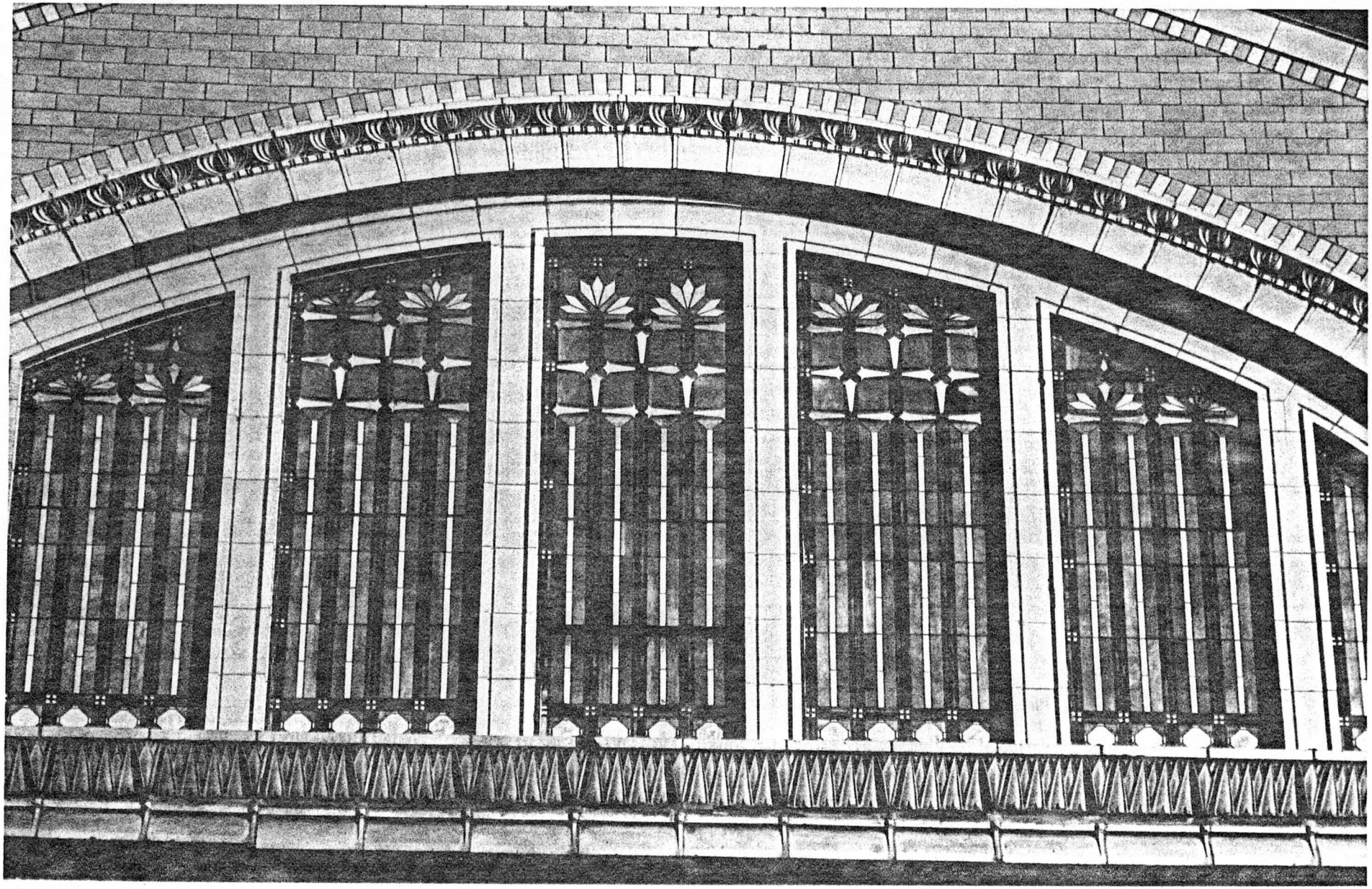


Figure 5: Detail of the terra-cotta arch and stained glass of the west side attic window.

*(Photograph by Raymond T. Tatum for the Chicago Historic Resources Survey)*



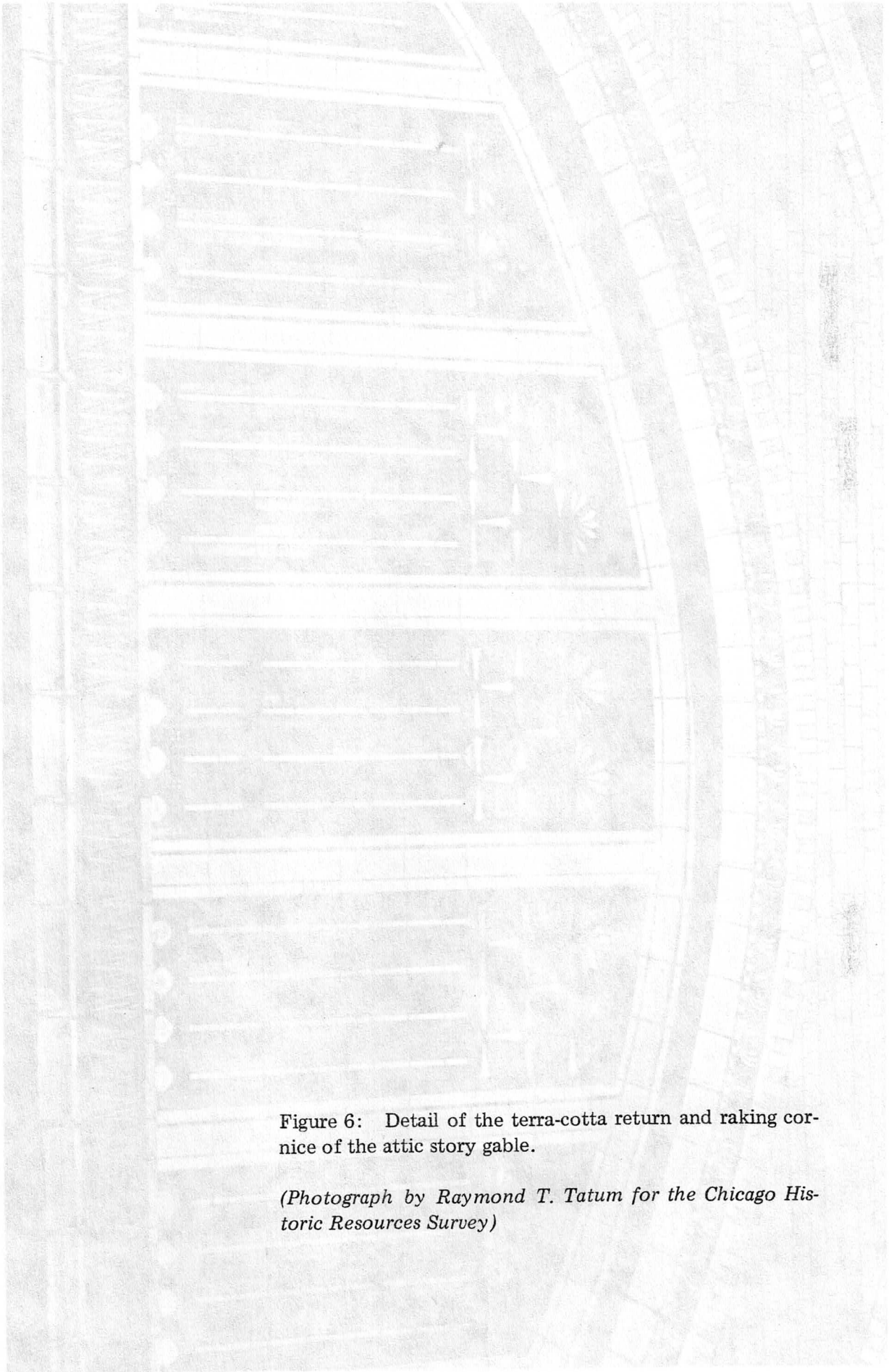


Figure 6: Detail of the terra-cotta return and raking cornice of the attic story gable.

*(Photograph by Raymond T. Tatum for the Chicago Historic Resources Survey)*

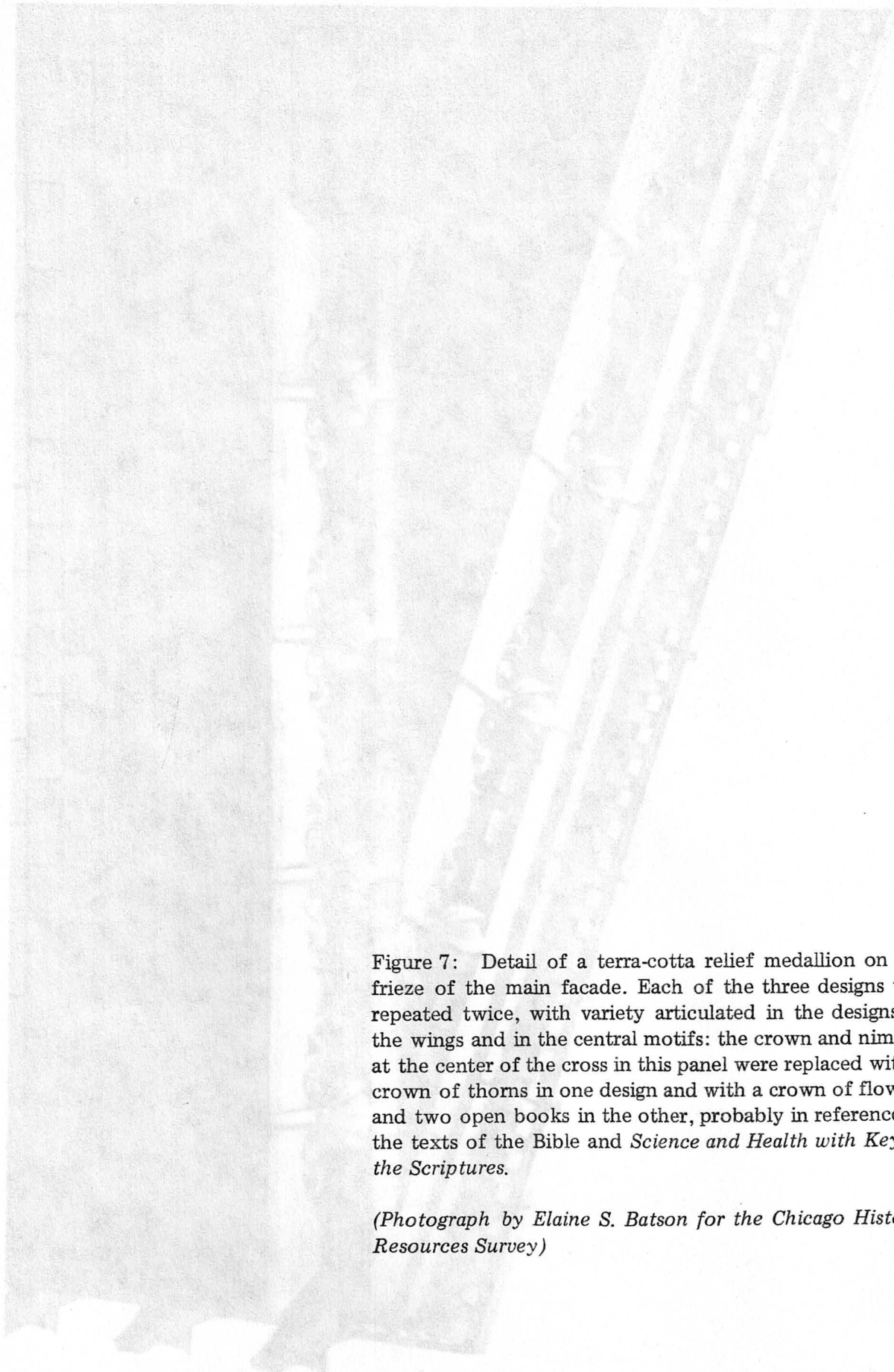


Figure 7: Detail of a terra-cotta relief medallion on the frieze of the main facade. Each of the three designs was repeated twice, with variety articulated in the designs of the wings and in the central motifs: the crown and nimbus at the center of the cross in this panel were replaced with a crown of thorns in one design and with a crown of flowers and two open books in the other, probably in reference to the texts of the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures.*

*(Photograph by Elaine S. Batson for the Chicago Historic Resources Survey)*

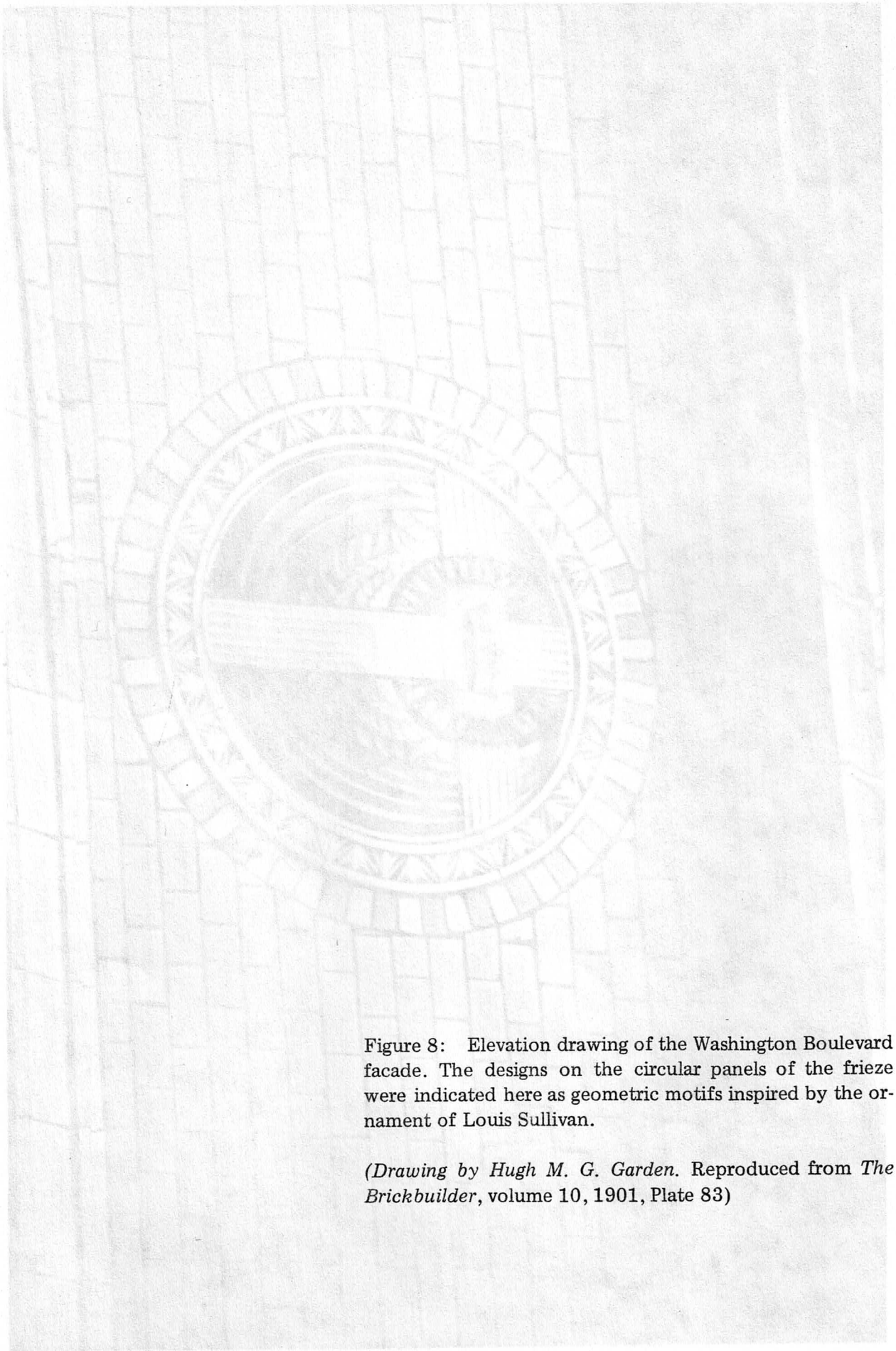


Figure 8: Elevation drawing of the Washington Boulevard facade. The designs on the circular panels of the frieze were indicated here as geometric motifs inspired by the ornament of Louis Sullivan.

*(Drawing by Hugh M. G. Garden.* Reproduced from *The Brickbuilder*, volume 10, 1901, Plate 83)

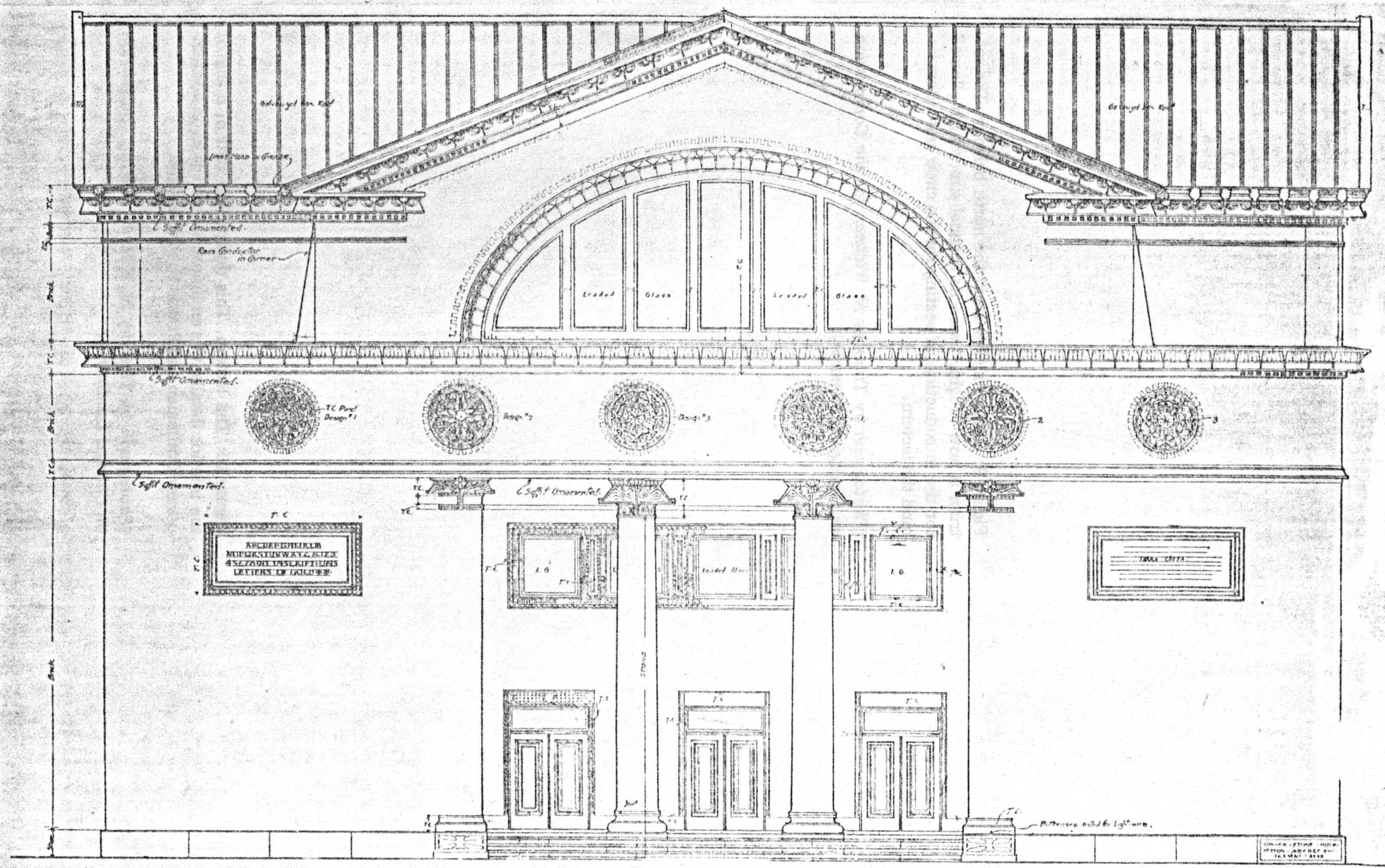
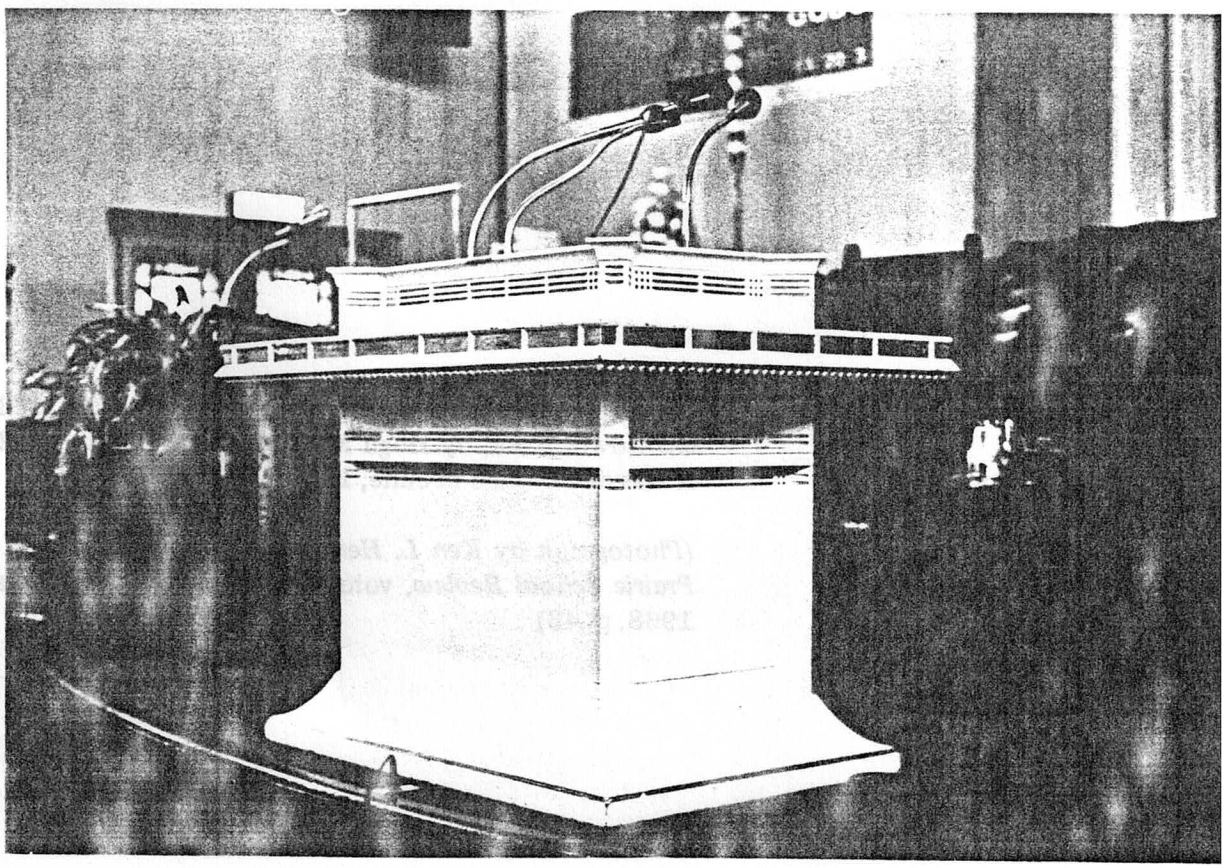

Galvanized Iron Roof
Lowest Head in Gutter
Soffit Ornamented
Rain Conductor in Corner
Leaded Glass
Leaded Glass
T.C. Pond Design #1
Design #2
Design #3
Soffit Ornamented
Soffit Ornamented
Soffit Ornamented
ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ&1234
5678910 INSCRIPTIONS
LETTERS OF GOLD
L.G.
Leaded Glass
L.G.
TERRA COTTA
Brick Piers
Brick Piers
Brick Piers

Figure 9: Interior view from the north balcony. The rostrum is now roughly twice its original size, which allowed for the introduction of seating for the choir and elders behind the lectern.

*(Photograph by Timothy N. Wittman for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks)*

Figure 10: The lectern. This design, like that of many of the interior details, was an innovative variation on contemporary Craftsman and Prairie School designs.

*(Photograph by Timothy N. Wittman for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks)*



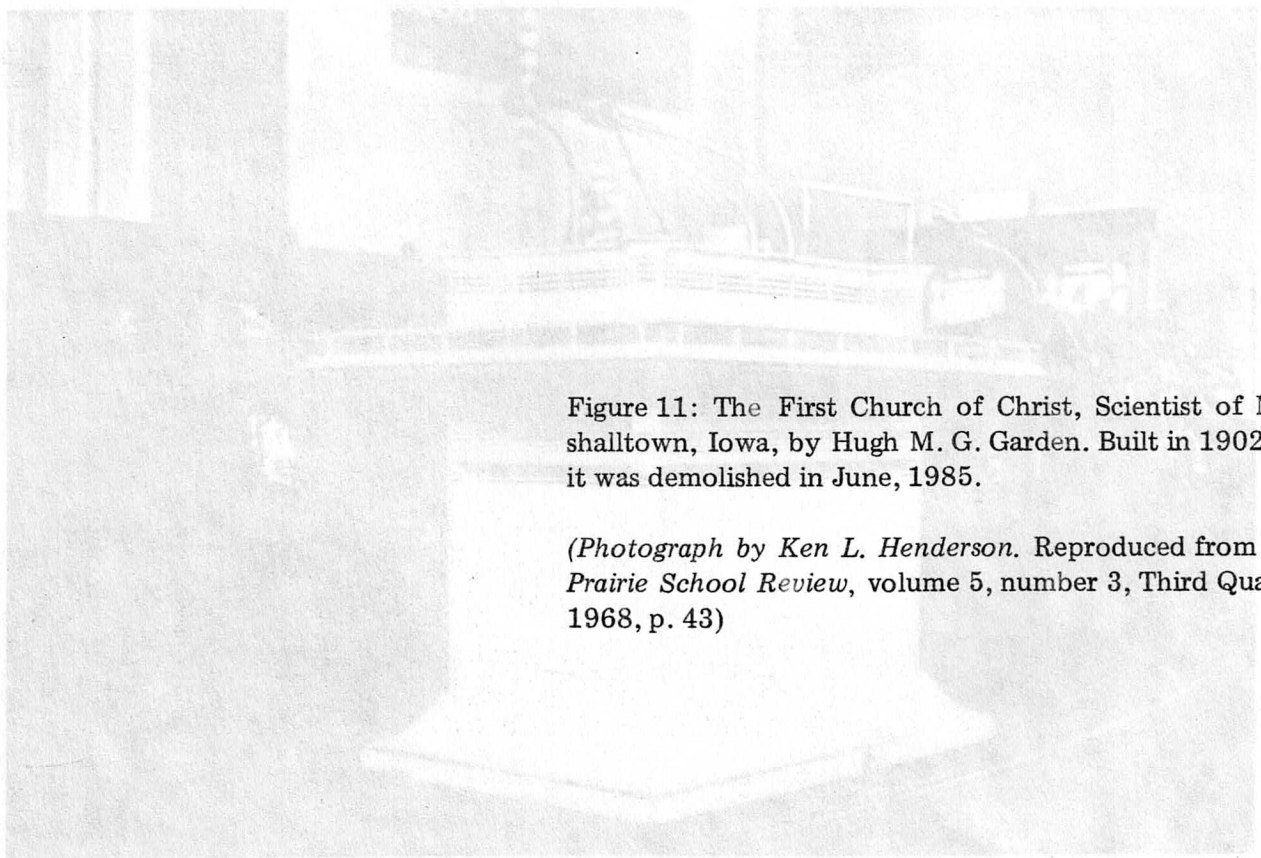


Figure 11: The First Church of Christ, Scientist of Marshalltown, Iowa, by Hugh M. G. Garden. Built in 1902-03, it was demolished in June, 1985.

*(Photograph by Ken L. Henderson.* Reproduced from *The Prairie School Review*, volume 5, number 3, Third Quarter 1968, p. 43)

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

"The Architecture of Certain Christian Science Churches." *The Craftsman*, VII (October, 1904 - March, 1905), 689-92.

Art Institute of Chicago. Burnham Library, Scrapbook on Architecture. Letter, Sally Garden Mitchell to Earl H. Reed, August 16, 1964.

*Chicago Inter Ocean.* July 14, 1901.

*Chicago Tribune*. October 7, 1961.

"A Church Built of Enamel Brick." *The Brickbuilder*, X (November, 1901), 240-41 and plates 83 and 86.

Greengard, Bernard C. "Hugh M. G. Garden." *The Prairie School Review*, III (First Quarter, 1966), 6-11.

Schlereth, Thomas J. "Greek Temples and Roman Domes: An Architect of Christian Science, 1897-1914." Chapter of forthcoming biography on Solon S. Beman. (typewritten.)

Shank, Wesley I. "Hugh Garden in Iowa." *The Prairie School Review*, V (Third Quarter, 1968), 43-47.

Wiltsee, Herbert L. "Religious Developments in Chicago, 1893-1915." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1953.

Additional research material used in the preparation of this report is on file at the office of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks and is available to the public.

The author would like to thank Prof. Thomas J. Schlereth of the University of Notre Dame for his generosity in sharing his manuscript on the life and work of Solon S. Beman.

**********

*Staff for this publication*

Timothy N. Wittman, *research and writing*
Janice Curtis, *production assistant*

*Survey Documentation - 27th Ward*

Elaine S. Batson
Patrick Hamill
Raymond T. Tatum
Timothy N. Wittman
Arlene Otis, *staff assistant*

*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks was established in 1968 by city ordinance, and was given the responsibility of recommending to the City Council that specific landmarks be preserved and protected by law. The ordinance states that the Commission, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, can recommend any area, building, structure, work of art, or other object that has sufficient historical, community, or aesthetic value. Once the City Council acts on the Commission's recommendation and designates a Chicago Landmark, the ordinance provides for the preservation, protection, enhancement, rehabilitation, and perpetuation of that landmark. The Commission assists by carefully reviewing all applications for building permits pertaining to the designated Chicago Landmarks. This insures that any proposed alteration does not detract from the qualities that caused the landmark to be designated.*

*The Commission makes its recommendations to the City Council only after extensive study. This preliminary summary of information has been prepared by the Commission staff and was submitted to the Commission when it initiated consideration of the historical and architectural qualities of this potential landmark.*

CITY OF CHICAGO

Eugene Sawyer, Acting Mayor

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

Peter C. B. Bynoe, Chairman
Irving J. Markin, Vice-Chairman
Thomas E. Gray, Secretary
John W. Baird
Marian Despres
Josue Gonzalez
Andrew L. Heard
Elizabeth L. Hollander
Nancy L. Kaszak

William M. McLenahan, Director
Room 516
320 North Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610
(312) 744-3200